



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to EU Special Representative to Macedonia, Alexis Brouhns, and to Head of Mission Skopje, Ambassador Craig Jenness

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Douglas A. Davidson
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 13, 2003

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We thank Ambassadors Brouhns and Jenness for their assessments. The United States appreciates the hard work done by you and your staffs and the fine cooperation between our organizations on the ground. We must also mention the excellent work done by the Personal Representative of the CiO, Ambassador van der Stoel, NATO Ambassador Biegman, NATO's General Cigna (please allow us to welcome his replacement, General Del Manzano), and Head of the EC Delegation Chiarini. The work you all do in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia truly is a model of international cooperation.

The United States offers our condolences to Poland, which lost two valiant soldiers in Macedonia last week to a land mine. Their sacrifice to ensure stability in Macedonia was not in vain. We look forward to the quick and full recovery of their injured colleague and those civilians who were hurt in this unfortunate incident.

The United States is pleased with the attitude and actions the Macedonian Government is taking towards full implementation of the Framework Agreement. We look forward to rapid completion this year of remaining legislative implementation steps, including decentralization measures and passage of a law on passports and on the use of symbols. These, among others, are key steps forward in Macedonia's drive toward Euro-Atlantic integration.

The United States applauds the anti-corruption position taken by the government. Key to the success of these efforts, however, will be the avoidance of partisanship or selective enforcement. We applaud Interior Minister Kostov's cooperation with the OSCE Mission in Skopje and his strong stance against organized crime and recent anti-trafficking efforts. The sea change that has occurred in the Interior Ministry over the past several months deserves high praise.

The United States is pleased with the progress thus far on the disarmament and disbandment of the "Lions" paramilitary group, and we stress that their dispersal is key. Any "Lions" retained should be dispersed throughout other existing units, not retained as a group. There is no place in Macedonia's Interior Ministry for a mono-ethnic security unit with ties to last year's human rights abuses. Once properly vetted, qualified former "Lions" should be appropriately trained and integrated into regular police units. We agree that Macedonia needs a well-trained, multi-ethnic counter-insurgency unit to replace the "Lions", and will continue

to engage the Government of Macedonia and our international partners in Skopje to see this come about.

Finally, we also see the need to de-politicize the Police Academy's recruitment process and we welcome Ambassador Jenness' efforts therein.

Thank you.